

To what extent does Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) influence social media users to make spontaneous travel decisions?

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ABSTRACT,

In today's digital age the concept of Fear of Missing Out has emerged as an important psychological phenomenon. This study investigates the extent to which FoMO influences social media users to make spontaneous travel decisions. This research investigates the direct relationship between FoMO and travel behavior, considering social media usage as the mediating variable, and psychological traits as the moderator variable. This research was conducted by distributing online survey, after which 102 people participated in the study. Contrary to the expected hypothesis the study showed that FoMO does not significantly affect social media usage, and psychological traits do not moderate the relationship between FoMO and spontaneous travel decision. In this research the complexity of FoMO is highlighted, as the data did not show high statistical significance to prove the hypotheses.

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Keywords

Fear of Missing Out, social media, spontaneous travel decisions, psychological traits, consumer behavior, push and pull theory, social comparison theory, travel behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is characterized as computer-mediated applications where users develop content that is intended and maintained to link users, their profiles, and content with others (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Every year there is growth in social media users. 62.3% of the world's population uses social media platforms with the average usage per day being 2 hours and 23 minutes (Chaffey, 2024). Social media usage is integrated into the daily tasks, no matter age or gender (D.says et al., 2024). The advances in technology have eased many aspects of life, including the aspect of travelling. Social media users can now access the needed information through social media platforms. It was discovered that some social media platforms may provide a sense of connection and promote a greater level of social involvement (Przybylski et al., 2013). However, while there is a great advantage of social media that is provided to some, others may feel down due to their fear of missing out on opportunities, and specifically on travelling. Psychological research supports the idea that humans are continually making social comparisons. Social comparisons, or comparisons of oneself to others, are a fundamental mechanism that influences people's judgements, experiences, and behavior (Crusius et al., 2022). The pressure from social media can be experienced by social media users as part of the FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) phenomenon.

The continual need to be in constant contact with what other people are doing is a defining feature of Fear or Missing Out (FoMO), which is the widespread fear that others may be enjoying fulfilling experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski et al., 2013). Social networking involvement fosters meaningful relationships between individuals and groups, but a new study indicates costs associated with its usage and advantages, including loneliness and social comparison (Oberst et al., 2016). Even though it is acknowledged that FoMO is not exclusively associated with social media platforms, it is still believed that social media users tend to check the updates of their followings often to keep up with their activities (Oberst et al., 2016).

Spontaneous travel is the act of embarking on a vacation without much prior planning (Inc., 2023). Tourism, defined as travel for its own purpose, became a new kind of mass consumption. Encouragement of consumption has significant links to identity, lifestyle, and quality of life (Hall, 2011). It is important to address the effects of FoMO on the spontaneous travel decisions that may affect users differently depending on their psychological traits. When the research on spontaneous buying is analyzed, it has found that there is a substantial association between the cognitive and emotional condition of the individual at that time and impulsive purchase from online sites (Dawson & Kim, 2009). It was discovered that customers with a FoMO inclination behaved differently than typical consumers before, during, and after making a choice (Argan & Argan, 2019). Such behavior is associated with the Push and Pull theory. Push factors are internal reasons or pressures that motivate tourists to seek activities that satisfy their needs, whereas pull factors are location-generated forces and tourists' knowledge of a place (Gnoth, 1997). Social media-induced anxiety, produced by the Fear of Missing Out on exciting events shared by peers, is a powerful push-factor to make spontaneous decisions (Good & Hyman, 2020). On the other hand, the pull factor is associated with the "pulling" reasons are providing possibilities or rewards that they see as superior to their existing location.

Previous studies have researched the psychological effects of the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in its relation to social media use. However, it has been found that there is a lack of focused research on how FoMO specifically affects travel decisions through social media use (Zhu et al., 2016). There were numbers of works discussing how FoMO can lead to social

comparisons and anxiety, which is one of the connections that will be paid attention to in this research (Przybylski et al., 2013). Research on FoMO's influence on travel behavior is limited in scope and does not address tourism as a potential outcome of FoMO-driven consumerism (Efendioğlu, 2019; Hall, 2011). Some studies conducted research about FoMO in the context of general consumer behavior, named "Fomsumerism", pointing at differences in decision-making processes (Argan & Argan, 2019). However, the impact on spontaneous travel decisions was not addressed. Due to the increasing significance of FoMO in today's digital age, it is important to investigate FoMO's impact on different behavioral aspects (Przybylski et al., 2013). This research aims to fill the research gap by looking at how FoMO influences spontaneous travel decisions from seeing other people enjoying their experiences on social media.

1.1 The research question

Based on the discussion above the identified research gap the following research question is formulated:

"To what extent does Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) influence social media users to make spontaneous travel decisions?"

1.2 Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to look at how the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) impacts social media users' decisions to go on spontaneous trips. The study will investigate if exposure to social media information causes FoMO, which leads to spontaneous travel decisions. Psychological factor will also be accounted for, since it is assumed that FoMO will be experienced differently by everyone and is not uniform (Hayran et al., 2020). Understanding this link can help to drive marketing tactics and improve the knowledge of social media's impact on travel behavior.

1.3 Academic and Practical Relevance

This research paper will give more understanding on how the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) influences travel behavior within the context of social media usage. Since FoMO is a relatively new concept this research will be beneficial and insightful in adding to the existing information about it (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Prior research has highlighted the psychological and social implications of FoMO, but has not thoroughly studied its influence on travel behavior (Przybylski et al., 2013). This research will provide empirical evidence to support or question current hypotheses in social psychology, consumer behavior, and tourism research. There will be an advanced understanding of the behavioral aspect of social media users since the study will be made using responses of the survey. Besides understanding the intrinsic motivation to travel spontaneously, the study will provide the information to travel marketers, destination promoters and social media platforms, which they can utilize to design tailored advertisements that appeal to social media users' FoMO-driven motivations. Some companies may create marketing campaigns, promotional activities, and content creation to trigger the need to make a last-minute travel decision (Oberst et al., 2016). On the other hand, some companies will get informed of the destination branding efforts and social media platform features to increase user engagement and happiness while reducing the negative consequences of FoMO.

The remainder of the paper is organized into the following sections: literature review with the theoretical framework that is used for the research hypotheses; then there is a methodology section that talks about the sample and data collection procedure, followed by the results analysis, testing the hypotheses, discussion, and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section the theories of Fear of Missing Out, Social Comparison and Push and Pull will be discussed. Social media remains a relatively new type of media which makes it have a high attention from researchers. Therefore, knowing the information given in this research paper the focus will be in identifying the relationship between social media, FoMO and spontaneous travel decisions using existing literature.

2.1 Fear of Missing Out

FoMO is characterized by the need to remain constantly connected to what others are doing (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). The Fear of Missing Out has a complex structure: FoMO entails two processes: first, the sense of missing out, followed by obsessive behavior to retain these social relationships (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). The concept of FoMO investigates the fear of social marginalization. Through social media, there is constant awareness of what an individual may be missing in terms of a good time, which is described as "it creates distorted perceptions of edited lives of others" (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). The Fear of Missing Out is considered a sort of unbalanced attachment to social media and has been associated with a range of negative life experiences and feelings, such as a loss of sleep, decreased life competency, emotional strain, negative consequences on physical well-being, anxiety, and a lack of emotional control (Gupta & Sharma, 2021).

Past research has found that higher levels of FoMO are associated with increased anxiety and stress which can lead to problematic social media use and negatively affect mental health (Elhai et al., 2021). Due to the uniqueness and quick development of social media and a unique structure of FoMO itself, the available knowledge is still insufficient and must be regularly updated and researched (Lara & Bokoch, 2021). The need to explore FoMO through the lens of social media also comes from research that says FoMO significantly predicts social media addiction and emotional symptoms especially among teenagers (Fioravanti et al., 2021). Additionally, there is research that explores consumer's response mechanisms in relation to externally initiated FoMO appeals in marketing. It has also been researched that as individuals seek to not miss out on experiences shared by their peers, FoMO may be the driving force to make spontaneous travel decisions (Hodkinson, 2016).

2.1.1 Social Comparison Theory

FoMO is associated with comparison between oneself and others, which relates to social comparison theory. Social comparisons influence people's judgements, experiences, and behavior (Crusius et al., 2022). There are two types of social comparisons: upward comparison and downward comparison. Upward social comparison happens when people compare themselves to individuals who they believe to be superior to them. Downward social comparison happens when people compare themselves to individuals who are worse off than them. While the upward social comparison focuses on the desire to improve the status and become more like those who are believed to be superior, the downward social comparison considers the feeling of superiority over those who are believed to be inferior due to their status or abilities (Kendra Cherry, 2022). FoMO as a phenomenon resembles the upward social comparison, as it is the feeling that makes an individual feel inferior which motivates them to make decisions towards reaching the desirable superiority level, in this case it will be explored in terms of making spontaneous traveling decisions.

2.2 Push and Pull Theory

According to the push and pull theory, individuals are attracted to travel for two reasons: push factors, which are negative motivations that drive people away from a location, and pull factors, which are good motivations that draw people to it (Uysal et al., 2008). One focuses on whether to go and the other on where to go (Klenosky, 2002). Pull factors are the opposite of push factors: they attract individuals to a certain region. Pull factors for a location include different opportunities and benefits from a place (Gnoth, 1997). FoMO is related to a push-factor since it is believed that the fear of not fitting in motivates people to travel spontaneously. The dissatisfaction aspect that is critical for the push-factor is the tendency of social media users to compare their experience to the experiences of others as depicted online. The response to push factors varies from person to person due to unique psychological traits. For example, the individuals with higher level with neuroticism, or anxiety experience more intense push factors due to higher sensitivity to rejection or social exclusion (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In terms of social media, it has been found that excessive use of social media platforms leads to increased feelings dissatisfaction, meaning triggering the push factors (Vogel et al., 2014). The idea of social media potentially intensifying push factors is supported by the research saying that constant exposure to traveling content on social media can trigger FoMO (push factor), leading to impulsive traveling (Przybylski et al., 2013).

2.4.2 Theoretical Framework

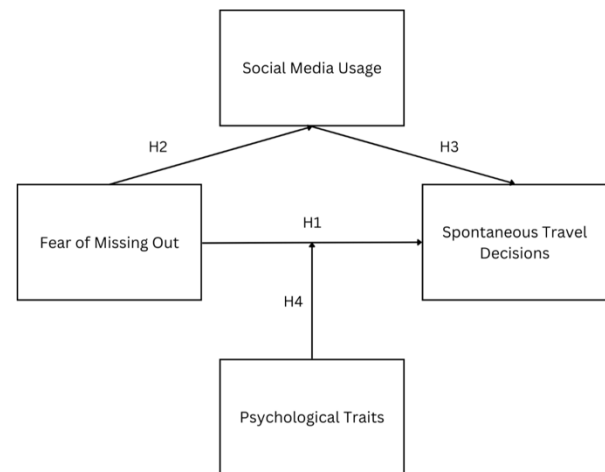


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

2.5 Hypotheses

To answer the main research question of this thesis, "To what extent does FoMO influence social media users to make spontaneous travel decisions?", the hypotheses were formulated.

2.5.1 Hypothesis 1

The H1 on the Figure 1 (Theoretical Framework) is responsible for the main research link between the Fear of Missing Out and Spontaneous Travel Decisions. It is assumed that there is a positive relationship between FoMO and the Spontaneous Travel Decision variables. It is a crucial relationship to study because there are fewer studies that focus on FoMO impacting travel decisions; yet, based on current research, the link appears to have a logical origin. This link demonstrates the fact that it is assumed that FoMO will positively impact spontaneous travel decisions. Therefore, to address this link, the hypothesis was made:

H1: The Fear of Missing Out would have a direct positive impact on the Spontaneous Travel Decisions.

2.5.2 Hypothesis 2

Based on existing research on FoMO it has been found that it is closely associated with social media, however, it is not limited to it (Oberst et al., 2016). Therefore, the link between the Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Usage is assumed to be positive. It must be acknowledged that FoMO may be a trigger for more social media use by itself. The need for acknowledgement for this hypothesis is to establish a connection that FoMO influences social media. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H2: The Fear of Missing Out would have a positive impact on Social Media Usage.

2.5.3 Hypothesis 3

It is important to acknowledge that FoMO is named to be a big part of social media, however it does not have to be always associated with it. In this research paper it must be considered that there are other options from which people can have a will to go on a spontaneous trip besides seeing information in social media. Therefore, the hypothesis to address this was made:

H3: Social Media Usage would have a moderating effect on the Spontaneous Travel Decisions.

2.5.4 Hypothesis 4

It is important to acknowledge that participants will experience FoMO differently due to the set of psychological traits they have. Therefore, this variable must be considered when making a judgement. Based on a different set of psychological characteristics individuals will respond to FoMO differently, since it is believed that FoMO does not have a universal or the same impact on every individual. The hypothesis to address this was made:

H4: Psychological Traits would have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between the Fear of Missing Out and Spontaneous Travel Decisions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to Methodology

This methodology selection explains how the research question will be addressed using a scientific approach. Out of the existing general categories for research design, quantitative analysis is the most applicable approach for this research. Quantitative research collects statistically meaningful data from present and future users using sampling methods such as online surveys, polls, and questionnaires (Fleetwood, 2024). The focus of the following research is on exploring the influence of the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on social media users' spontaneous travel decisions. The quantitative research design will quantify the relationship between variables to test the hypotheses. The statistical data on the prevalence and size of FoMO-induced travel behaviors among social media users will be found.

Through quantitative research design it will be discovered how many people may experience FoMO that leads to the spontaneous decisions that they make. It is crucial to understand the numeric representation of those affected by FoMO, and quantitative design allows for a larger sample of social media users.

The data was collected using a survey. The survey was promoted using social media sites such as Instagram stories. To receive as many replies as possible, the poll was also distributed to WhatsApp groups. With online social media sites, it is possible

to use the snowball sampling strategy: after posting the survey on social media platforms those who see the survey were asked to distribute the survey on their platforms or message it straight to others. This sampling strategy comprises a primary data source recommending other possible data sources who may be able to participate in the research activities (Bhat, 2023).

3.2 Sample

In this study, 102 individuals completed an online questionnaire. Many statisticians agree that a sample size of 100 is the minimum needed for meaningful results (Survicate, n.d.). This will be a sufficient representation of key demographic groups. Having at least 100 responses will increase the relevance of findings and will give greater support to raise conclusions. The poll was delivered in English via Instagram and WhatsApp. To ensure confidentiality. Participants were informed at the beginning that participation is voluntary and anonymous.

Of the 102 responders, 100 completed the questionnaire fully. Responders were screened out at the first step of the questionnaire. When questioned about their age, only participants aged 18 and over could continue with the survey, since it is believed that participants aged 18 and above are more likely to engage more in social media (Gottfried, 2024). Age constraint also matters because traveling may be problematic if one is below the legal age in Europe, for example it may be hard to book hotels and flights. Since the survey was distributed through social media, it helped capture social media users as participants, screened out by the age question.

To ensure this research's reliability, as part of the sampling method, both convenience and stratified sampling were used. Convenience sampling entails selecting respondents who are "convenient" for the researcher. Convenience sampling method is about recruiting participants from social media platforms (e.g. Instagram stories and WhatsApp posts asking people to participate in a survey), based on their availability and willingness to take part (Etikan, 2016). Due to no limitation on age (besides being more than 18), status and gender, it is important to capture different responses on the topic. This approach provides flexibility of sampling methods in different strata and obtains better precision of estimations of target parameters when each stratum is formed of generally homogeneous units (Latpate et al., 2021). Therefore, stratified sampling can be used to guarantee that multiple demographic categories are represented in the sample.

After filling out the ethical form and getting the ethical approval the survey was distributed via Instagram Stories and WhatsApp groups. Table 1 below shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, meaning their gender, age, education level, and income per year.

Table 1 – Socio-demographic characteristics (N = 100)

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	53	53%
Female	47	47%
Age		
18-20	26	26%
21-23	61	61%
24-26	9	9%
27+	4	4%

Education Level		
Student at School	2	2%
Student at University	90	90%
Unemployed	3	3%
Employed	5	5%
Self-employed	0	0%
Income per year (euros)		
Less than 30,000	86	86%
30,000-50,000	6	6%
50,000-70,000	5	5%
70,000-100,000	1	1%
More than 100,000	2	2%

3.3 Method

A survey was developed using the Qualtrics platform. To eliminate misunderstanding and improve the quality of the data obtained, all items were standardized using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Having a standard for the scale simplifies the data and provides for better comparison (McLafferty, 2004)

The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. The survey consisted of four main parts. After verifying that the respondent is 18 years or older and uses social media, the demographic questions about gender, age, education, and income followed. Then, participants were given nine questions about FoMO, five questions related to social media, five questions on psychological traits and four questions on spontaneous travel decisions. Table 2 shows the sources where items were taken from.

Table 2 – Operationalization table

Variable	Source	Number of items
Fear of Missing Out (IV)	Zhang et al., 2020	9
Social Media Usage (Mediating)	Sholeh & Rusdi, 2019b	5
Psychological Traits (Moderating)	Grace, Ross, & Shao, 2015	5
Spontaneous Travel Decision (DV)	Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011	2
	Kassem, 2003	2

*All the variables are measured on a 5-point Likert scale

3.4 Analysis

The dataset was imported from Qualtrics into an excel sheet and later imported and analyzed in RStudio. In RStudio firstly the file with the respondents' data was made into a survey data file. Then, the unnecessary columns were cleaned out in the

survey data and the empty strings were removed to ensure accuracy of the data. The following control variables were defined: gender, age, education level and income per year. A single table with descriptive statistics for the four variables was created. Specifically, those variables are: The Fear of Missing Out (Independent Variable), Spontaneous Travel Decisions (Dependent Variable), Psychological Traits (Moderating Variable), and Social Media Usage (Mediating Variable). The mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, and loading factor provide the overview of central tendencies, variability, reliability and the factor correlations of survey data. The clear patterns are seen through aggregated data, meaning the blocks of questions are grouped accordingly. The aggregation of data provides clearer links between variables. The correlation matrix table shows the correlation between variables. The regression analysis considers the mediating and moderating effect to be able to make conclusions on how Social Media Usage and Psychological Traits will impact the relationship between FoMO and Spontaneous Travel Decisions. Lastly, the Control Variables table are provided to analyze whether the demographic characteristics of participants influence the effect on Spontaneous Travel Decisions.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Analytics

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for all items under four categories: Fear of Missing Out, Social Media Usage, Psychological Traits and Spontaneous Travel Decision. The table includes the mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha and loading factor for each item. The mean values indicate central tendencies, standard deviation shows variability, Cronbach's alpha indicates internal consistency, and loading factors indicate the correlation of each item with its factor.

The mean ranges between 1.25 and 4.00 for all the items. Higher mean suggests higher agreement with the statements in the survey. The standard deviation ranges from 0.50 to 1.89. This shows the variability of responses around the mean. The higher standard deviation suggests greater variability among responses. Cronbach's Alpha varies from 0.381 to 0.866. Since alpha is the measure of the internal consistency or reliability of items, it can be said that the data is mostly reliable. Spontaneous travel decisions have a somewhat weaker reliability than the rest of the items: Fear of Missing Out, Social Media Usage, and Psychological Traits.

Table 3 – Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	α	Loading
Fear of Missing Out			0.851	
FoMO1	4.00	1.41		0.215
FoMO2	2.75	1.26		0.302
FoMO3	2.75	1.50		0.605
FoMO4	3.50	1.29		-0.273
FoMO5	3.25	0.96		-0.270
FoMO6	2.00	1.41		0.975
FoMO7	2.25	1.89		0.972
FoMO8	2.00	1.41		0.768
FoMO9	1.75	1.50		0.981
Social Media Usage			0.816	
SocialMedia1	2.00	0.82		0.944

SocialMedia2	1.25	0.50	0.110
SocialMedia3	2.25	0.50	-0.924
SocialMedia4	2.00	0.82	0.944
SocialMedia5	2.25	1.89	-0.956
Psychological Traits		0.866	
PsycTraits1	4.00	0.82	-0.880
PsycTraits2	4.00	0.82	-0.658
PsycTraits3	3.25	0.96	0.901
PsycTraits4	3.00	1.63	0.659
PsycTraits5	3.25	0.96	0.901
Spontaneous Travel Decisions		0.381	
Travel1	2.50	1.29	-0.015
Travel2	1.50	1.00	0.382
Travel3	3.50	0.58	1.057
Travel4	4.00	1.41	-0.684

Table 4 presents the aggregated descriptive statistics. Aggregating data simplifies comparisons and reveals broad trends, allowing for the detection of overarching patterns while avoiding specific. While it may hide nuances, it provides a clear high-level summary that is useful for early comparisons and drawing broad conclusions.

4.1.1 Mean

The questions asked to participants were conducted in a 5 Likert scale, meaning 1 is Strongly Disagree, and 5 is Strongly Agree. Therefore, the results shown in the Descriptive Statistics reflect the central tendencies of respondents ranging from 1.95 to 3.5 for the four items. The mean for FoMO of 2.69 indicates that the participants are neutral or slightly disagreeing with the statements. This suggests that participants may not be experiencing so much Fear of Missing Out. The mean of 1.95 for Social Media Usage shows that the respondents are generally disagreeing with the statements. Psychological Traits with a mean of 3.5 indicates that the participants mostly agree with the statements related to psychological traits. The Spontaneous Travel Decisions item has a mean of 2.88 which shows a neutral to slightly agreeing tendency of participants with making spontaneous travel decisions.

4.1.2 Standard Deviation

Standard Deviation shows how dispersed the data is in relation to the mean. Based on the range of standard deviation from 0.905 to 1.40 in aggregated data some conclusions can be made. High standard deviation for FoMO indicates that there is a wide range of responses, which suggests that there is a variety of different experiences with FoMO. It has been already assumed that FoMO is going to influence everyone differently, therefore the Psychological Traits variable was included in the research. Psychological traits with SD = 1.04 means that the questions of this item were answered in a moderate variety. Social Media Usage with standard deviation of 0.905 means that the responses on social media questions are relatively less spread out around the mean than FoMO. Spontaneous Travel Decisions have a standard deviation of 1.07 which means that they are moderately spread out around the mean.

4.1.3 Cronbach's Alpha

The Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency, how closely related a set of items are as a group. Cronbach's Alpha ranged from 0.381 to 0.866. For FoMO ($\alpha=0.851$), Social Media Usage ($\alpha=0.816$) and Psychological Traits ($\alpha=0.866$) variables, there is a high level of internal consistency, meaning that those items are highly reliable and consistent in measuring the concept. However, the Spontaneous Travel Decisions variable has a lower value of $\alpha=0.381$, which indicates a lesser internal consistency among the items.

4.1.4 Loading

The factor loading points at the correlation between the item and the factor (Tavakol & Wetzel, 2020). Based on the loadings of aggregated data, which range from 0.5345 to 0.7998, it can be stated that the variables are moderately to strongly correlated with the principal component, meaning that they have a strong impact on the component. The FoMO (Loading=0.5734) and Spontaneous Travel Decisions (Loading=0.5345) have a moderate to strong influence on the overall score of each item. The Social Media Usage (Loading=0.7756) and Psychological Traits (Loading=0.7998) variables have a stronger influence on the items.

Table 4 – Descriptive Statistics for Aggregated Data

	Mean	SD	α	Loading
FoMO	2.69	1.40	0.851	0.5734
Social Media Usage	1.95	0.905	0.816	0.7756
Psychological Traits	3.5	1.04	0.866	0.7998
Spontaneous Travel Decisions	2.88	1.07	0.381	0.5345

4.2 Correlation

The correlation matrix was produced using aggregated data to highlight larger patterns across variables, making it more convenient to examine relationships in the absence of individual item-level noise. Table 5 shows the correlations between FoMO, social media usage, psychological traits, and spontaneous travel decisions.

Table 5 – Correlation Matrix

	FoMO	SocialMedia	PsycTraits	Travel
FoMO				
SocialMedia	0.314		-0.841	
PsycTraits	0.209	-0.841		
Spontaneous Travel Decision	-0.978	-0.389	-0.161	

The matrix highlights multiple significant connections. There is a modest positive association (0.314) between FoMO and Social Media Usage, meaning that the greater levels of FoMO is associated with a more often social media use. There is a significant negative association (-0.978) between FoMO and Spontaneous Travel Decisions, indicating that individuals with greater FoMO are less likely to engage in spontaneous travel. The negative correlation of -0.841 between Psychological Traits and Social Media Usage suggests that individuals that frequently use social media may have certain specific psychological traits that make them more sensitive to FoMO. The Social Media Usage and Psychological Traits variables have a strong negative correlation of -0.841. This hints at the close link between social

media and certain psychological traits. The correlation between Social Media Usage and Spontaneous Travel Decisions is negative (-0.389), which suggests that higher social media usage is associated with a lower likelihood of spontaneous traveling.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Table 6 shows regression results for the correlation between variables. The analysis was performed in accordance with the variables: independent, dependent, mediating and moderating. Based on the coefficient, standard error, and p-value it can be stated whether the hypothesis is rejected or not. The coefficient estimates the unknown population characteristics and characterize the link between a predictor variable and the response (Frost, 2017).

4.3.1 Hypothesis 1

It was predicted that FoMO variable will have a direct positive impact on Spontaneous Travel Decisions. The coefficient for this relationship is equal to -0.651 which indicates that an increase in FoMO is associated with a decrease in Spontaneous Travel Decisions. P-value is less than 0.001, which means that this relationship is statistically significant. However, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is not supported by the data, since FoMO negatively impacts Spontaneous Travel Decisions. This suggests that in fact individuals with higher levels of FoMO might be less likely to engage in spontaneous travel decisions.

4.3.2 Hypothesis 2

It was predicted that FoMO variable will have a positive impact on Social Media Usage. The coefficient equals 0.091. Based on the data, there is a potential positive relationship between the items, but it is not statistically significant. The p-value = 0.508 is not significant. Therefore, there can be a positive relationship, however it is not strong enough to be considered reliable.

4.3.3 Hypothesis 3

It was predicted that the Social Media Usage variable will have a mediating effect on the Spontaneous Travel Decisions. The coefficient which is equal to -0.216 shows that for each unit increase in Social Media Usage, the Spontaneous Travel Decision will decrease by 0.216, which suggests the negative relationship between the two variables. The p-value of 0.362 suggests that the relationship between the variables is not statistically significant.

4.3.4 Hypothesis 4

It was expected that Psychological Traits would have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between FoMO and Spontaneous Travel Decisions. Based on the results demonstrated in Table 7 the moderator effect of Psychological Traits on the relationship between the FoMO and Spontaneous Travel Decisions can be tested. With the coefficient of 0.140, there is a positive moderation effect. P-value of 0.161 which is higher than the significance level of 0.50 shows that positive moderating effect of Psychological Traits on the relationship between FoMO and Spontaneous Travel Decisions is not statistically significant.

Based on the hypothesis testing through regression analysis it has been bound that all four hypotheses are rejected due to lack of statistical significance between the variables.

Table 6 – Regression Analysis: Mediation Effect

Variables	Coefficient	SE	p-value	Significance
Direct Effects				
Travel ~ FoMO	-0.651	0.069	<0.001	***
Travel ~ SocialMedia	-0.216	0.238	0.362	
SocialMedia ~ FoMO	0.091	0.138	0.508	
Indirect Effect				
Indirect (a*b)	-0.020	0.037	0.592	
Total Effect				
Total (c + a*b)	-0.671	0.072	<0.001	***

*** p < 0.001

Table 7 – Regression Analysis: Moderation Effect

Variables	Coefficient	SE	p-value	Significance
Intercept	0.093	0.093	1.004	0.318
FoMO_centered	-0.050	0.095	-0.527	0.599
PsycTraits_centered	-0.103	0.098	-1.049	0.297
SocialMedia_centered	-0.062	0.090	-0.692	0.491
FoMO_centered	0.140	0.099	1.413	0.161

4.4 Control variables

Based on the Control variables data (Figure 8), gender, age, education, and income variables it can be concluded that they show a small significance. To be specific, the coefficient for Males is $\beta=0.269$, with a p-value of 0.122. Female group serves as the reference category. These results indicate that being a specific gender does not have a significant impact on Spontaneous Travel Decision variable at the 10% significance level. The age coefficient ranging from 0.105 to 0.603 and p-value being less than 0.1 shows no significant impact on the Spontaneous Travel Decision variable. The education level with the coefficient ranging from -0.555 to 0.717 and p-values being less than 0.1 shows no significant effect on travel. This means that there is no specific educational level that has a statistically significant effect on travel based on the collected data. Lastly, income variables show no significant impact on the Travel variable. The coefficient for the earnings ranges from -0.959 to 0.180 with the p-values > 0.1, meaning these results indicate that income levels do not have a significant impact on Travel at the 10% significance level.

Table 8 – Control variables

Variables	Coefficient	SE	p-value
Gender (Reference: Female)			
Male	0.269	0.172	0.122
Age (Reference: 27+)			
18-20	0.105	0.676	0.876
21-23	0.489	0.662	0.462

24-26	0.603	0.706	0.396
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Education (Reference: Employed)

School	0.717	0.750	0.342
University	0.007	0.471	0.989
Unemployed	-0.555	0.641	0.389
Self-Employed	-0.027	0.590	0.963

Income (Reference: 100,000+)

Less than 30,000	-0.509	0.805	0.529
30,000-50,000	-0.959	0.805	0.237
50,001-70,000	0.018	0.944	0.985
70,001-100,000	0.180	1.355	0.895

4.5 Summary of results

The dataset analysis was made in several steps. It started with descriptive statistics where the mean, standard deviation, Cronbach’s alpha and loading were found. The data was then grouped to be aggregated, since it was assumed that having aggregated data for each of the four variables, namely FoMO, Social Media Usage, Psychological Traits and Spontaneous Travel Decisions could reveal the patterns without being too specific. Based on the mean values it can be said that participants were neutral or slightly disagreeing with FoMO statements (2.69), generally disagreeing with the Social Media Usage statements (1.95), agreeing with the Psychological Traits statements (3.5), and slightly agreeing with the Spontaneous Travel Decision statements (2.88). Cronbach’s alpha showed good reliability for FoMO, Social Media Usage and Psychological Traits. With the range of standard deviation from 0.905 to 1.40 the respondents had a different level of dispersion. The correlation matrix highlighted the modest positive correlation (0.314) between FoMO and Social Media Usage, while showing strong negative correlation (-0.978) between FoMO and Spontaneous Travel Decision. The regression analysis which included the mediation and moderation effect tests found no support for the proposed hypotheses. In fact, it was revealed that FoMO negatively impacts spontaneous travel decisions and does not significantly influence social media usage or interact with psychological traits. The analysis of control variables – gender, age, education, and income revealed that they do not have a significant effect on Spontaneous Travel Decision variable.

5. DISCUSSION

The goal of this research was to explore to what extent does Fear of Missing Out affect social media users to make spontaneous travel decisions through the acknowledgement of psychological traits of individuals.

The first hypothesis proposed that the Fear of Missing Out would directly impact spontaneous travel decisions. In contrast to the expectation of the positive correlation, regression analysis showed that there is a negative correlation between the two variables. This means that individuals experiencing FoMO are more likely not going to engage in spontaneous traveling. Due to the complex nature of FoMO which was highlighted in existing research it is questioned in what cases does FoMO influence decision-making, driving people for impulsive acts

(Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Such result may be due to complexity of FoMO. FoMO has a complex structure that has two processes: the sense of missing out, which is then followed by obsessive behavior (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). It may be assumed that even though the results did not provide enough evidence to confirm the hypothesis, participants still could be experiencing FoMO, but those experience were not necessarily followed by obsessive behavior, which is what was investigated in this research. Therefore, responses could be affected by FoMO, but due to the specific focus on traveling, to prove the hypothesis survey participants needed to be making spontaneous travel decisions.

The second hypothesis suggested that FoMO will positively influence social media usage. However, there was no significant relationship between these variables. Even though FoMO is usually related to social media, it is not limited to it and it is not guaranteed that FoMO will strongly impact social media usage (Hodkinson, 2016). This link was assumed due to existing research that was pointing at FoMO affecting social media usage (Fioravanti et al., 2021). The finding in this research does not necessarily question previous research on FoMO and its influence of Social Media, but rather highlights the uniqueness of FoMO as a concept that some might experience more than others.

The third hypothesis proposed that social media is the mediating concept of the relationship between FoMO and spontaneous travel decisions. It has been proven that there is no strong moderating effect. This finding challenges the idea that FoMO may be worsened when using more social media. This highlights how nuanced FoMO as a concept is.

The fourth hypothesis suggested that psychological traits would positively moderate the relationship between FoMO and spontaneous travel decisions. The hypothesis was not supported by the data; however, it can lead to the idea that FoMO is a more universal concept that can be experienced across different psychological profiles without much differentiation. Also, this finding leads to the opinion that it might be that FoMO is a more universal concept than thought of. But in this research psychological traits were taken into account, since it was considered that individual effect of FoMO will vary from person to person.

The analysis of the control variables suggests that gender, age, education, and income have no significant impact on spontaneous travel decisions.

6. CONCLUSION

The central question of this research is “To what extent does FoMO influence social media users to make spontaneous travel decisions?” The result of this study shows that FoMO has a negative significant effect on spontaneous travel decisions. This finding eliminates the initial hypothesis of the positive relationship between the variables. Higher levels of FoMO decrease the likelihood of individuals making spontaneous travel decisions. Additionally, FoMO does not significantly impact social media usage, and psychological traits do not significantly moderate the relationship between FoMO and spontaneous travel decisions.

This finding suggests that FoMO is a complex theory that does not necessarily drive spontaneous travel behavior. It can be the case that in the context of travel FoMO while inducing the feeling of overwhelm, leads to more cautious and thoughtful decisions. The complex nature of FoMO as a concept is underlined in this study, giving more opportunities for future research.

6.1 Implications

In terms of theoretical implications this research adds to understanding of FoMO as a driving force for spontaneous behaviors. This research highlights the need for a deep investigation of psychological effects of FoMO (Hodkinson, 2016). Overall, this research adds to the existing literature of FoMO, social media and consumer behavior. Based on the rejected hypotheses, it is obvious that the ideas examined had diverse consequences and outcomes, even if it appeared on the surface that connections might be formed.

Practically, the research's findings have implications for the marketing and travel industry. It is important to acknowledge that FoMO does not always lead to spontaneous traveling. More effective marketing strategies can be formed as the consequence, and social media accounts that promote traveling may change their strategies and focus on less of a triggering content. Due to the negative correlation of FoMO and spontaneous travel marketing and travel industry specialists may focus on creating reassuring content, as it is not going to be built on the anxiety of missing out. Additionally, in this paper the negative aspects of FoMO were addressed, therefore it is hoped for that social media platforms and content creators will strive to create more balanced and positive experiences for other users that do not cause stress and anxiety.

6.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has some limitations. Firstly, the sample size of 100 participants provides limited possibilities for concrete conclusions. Future research could benefit from larger and more varied samples, which will increase the diversity and generalizability of findings. In this research control variables did not have any effect on results; however this idea can be questioned if having a larger pool of respondents. Additionally, it is suggested that future research will benefit from exploring different cultural factors and how they shape the experiences and the impact of FoMO. For example, European countries may engage in less travel due to the easiness of traveling. It can also be explored how the non-European citizens show different patterns and approaches for traveling due to the logistical challenges of international travel, opposed to relatively easier travel options within Europe.

Since expected links between the variables have not been proven it is suggested that in the future research different moderating and mediating variables are explored. This research is also somewhat general due to the lack of specifications regarding social media usage, for example. The specific social media content was not explicitly identified. It was rather general. However, for future research it may be beneficial to look into specific content, as some social media users may not engage with any tourism related. It is suggested to explore different effects that could be generated from influencer content, or tourism-specific content that could cause different responses. Therefore, this also relates to the limitation of sample variability.

As another extension of this research similar research can be done but exploring FoMO apart from social media. It is going to be beneficial to find out more about FoMO and its complexity, exploring it from different angles. If this study, it has not been proven that social media has a mediating effect on the relationship between the Fear of Missing Out and spontaneous travel decisions. Changing the mediating valuable and exploring different mediating, but also moderating variables could be beneficial for future research.

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APPENDIX



You are invited to participate in a research study by Alyona Ukhabova from the University of Twente, Faculty of Behavioral, Management, and Social Sciences. The research is designed to understand and study to what extent does FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) influences social media users to make spontaneous travel decisions.

Completion of this questionnaire is voluntary. The survey is anonymous and the data from the questionnaire will only be used for my thesis.

The questionnaire takes less than five minutes to complete. Thank you for your time.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact e.ukhabova@student.utwente.nl

By continuing with the survey, you confirm that you are at least 18 years old and indicate your consent to participate in the research.

Yes, I agree to participate

No, I do not agree



Do you use social media? If the answer is "no", please stop with the survey

Yes

No

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other, please specify

What is your age?

18-20

21-23

24-26

27+

What is your education level?

Student at school

Student at university

Unemployed

Employed

Self-employed

Other, please specify

What is your income per year?

Less than 30,000

30,000 - 50,000

50,000 - 70,000

70,000 - 100,000

More than 100,000



Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is the worry that others are experiencing something better than you. It can involve feeling left out socially or missing out on something you wanted personally.

Please indicate how applicable the statement is to you

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I feel anxious when I do not experience events/opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe I am falling behind compared with others when I miss events/opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel anxious because I know something important or fun must happen when I miss events opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

capable of participating in events due to constraints of other things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel regretful of missing events/opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think my social groups view me as unimportant when I miss events/opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think I do not fit in social groups when I miss events/opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think I am excluded by my social groups when I miss events/opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel ignored/forgotten by my social groups when I miss events/opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This section helps us understand your social media habits and how they affect your emotions and decisions. The goal is to explore the connection between social media and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO).

Please indicate how applicable the statement is to you

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I often think of any photos/videos posted by others on the Instagram feed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often think about what is happening on Instagram when I do not access it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel there is an urge to continue checking Instagram stories continuously	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I often think about what others upload on Instagram stories

I see the contents of posts on the Instagram feed to reduce restlessness



Everyone experiences FoMO differently on social media. These questions will help identify how various psychological traits affect your experience of FoMO.

Please indicate how applicable the statement is to you

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

On social media people express themselves that is not true in real life

I don't want people to know too much about me

I often reveal to others more desirable things about myself than undesirable things

I use social media as a mechanism to portray positive images of myself to others

I tend to conform to social norms



Spontaneous travel involves going on trips with little planning. This concept is key in understanding how FoMO from social media can influence your travel decisions, as social media may encourage you to match the experiences you see online.

Please indicate how applicable the statement is to you

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I often use social media to know what destinations make a good impression on others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I don't see that the destination is making a good impression on others, I worry about my decision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel pressure from social media to travel regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I predict I will spontaneously travel in the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Thank you for spending time on the survey!

Your input is valuable and will contribute to the research efforts.

If you have any additional comments or feedback, please feel free to share them with the researcher e.ukhabova@student.utwente.nl